

Information for Pet Rabbit Owners in India

[BUNS INC. WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7, 2018](#)

Pet rabbit ownership in India is NOT the same as in the Western world and other first world countries. While rabbits are available for sale in pet stores in India, accompanying rabbit supplies such as pellets, hay, housing, suitable material for bedding and toileting, toys, basic medicinal treatment products, and the variety of fresh produce are not. There is little to no specialised veterinary care for small animals, let alone rabbits - which mean vaccinations and de-sexing are not a realistic option for rabbits. Other variables to be considered are affordability of and access to online purchasing, and the fact there are no animal welfare laws. This being so, other approaches to things Westerners take for granted are required and there is a need to make do with what is available despite its quality at times. So advising Indian pet rabbit owners is not the same as advising Western pet rabbit owners.

The protocols surrounding rabbit care and feeding remain the same, but food available for rabbits is limited to the following:

HAY

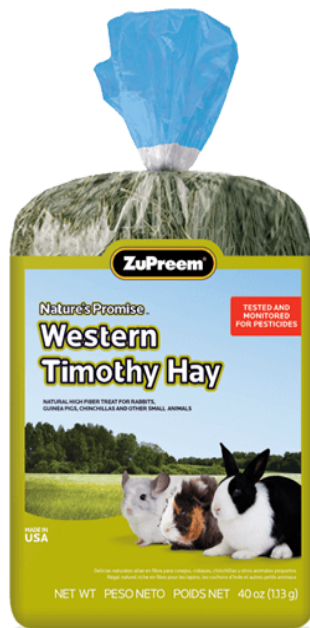
Hay MUST be 80% of a rabbit's diet but is not readily available. It can be made in a rudimentary form by drying out grass. It can also be purchased online. Here are some links:

Zupreem Timothy Hay:

<http://www.bharatint.com/search?q=Zupreem>



Timothy Hay is always the best option



Vitapol & Lolo Pets Polish Hay:

https://www.amazon.in/Vitapol-Rodents-Hay-300-g/dp/B01BAGGZIS/ref=redir_mobile_desktop?_encoding=UTF8&keywords=hay%20for%20rabbit&qid=1520400137&ref_=mp_s_a_1_1&sr=8-1





PELLETS

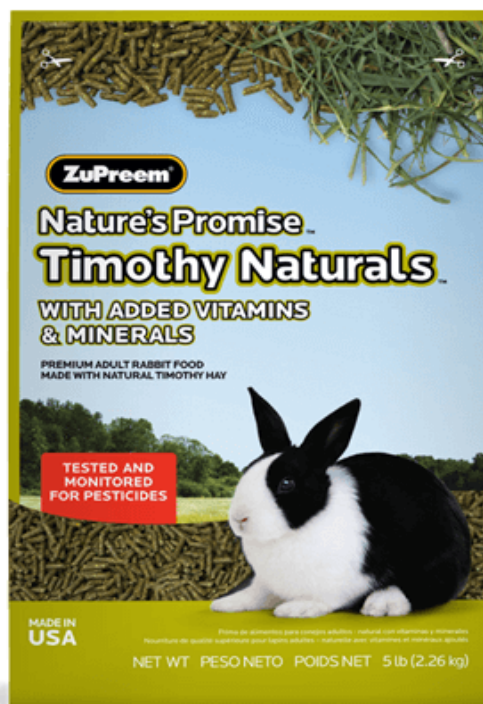
While pellets are not essential, they do provide fibre and help with conditioning and weight gain.



Pellets should just be pellets with nothing else in them - rabbits cannot have corn, maize, wheat, grain, oats or nuts!

Zupreem Nature's Promise Timothy Naturals Pellets

<http://www.bharatint.com/zupreem-np-rabbit-2.26kgs/p>



Indiamart has Oxbow Pellets & some other alternatives:

<https://dir.indiamart.com/search.mp?ss=rabbits+foods&src=askwd%3Akwd%3Drabbits+>



This is the best brand!

GRASS (Durva & Wheatgrass)

<https://m.facebook.com/groups/1952501684976739?view=permalink&id=2190847574475481>



Durva Grass



Wheatgrass

Safe fresh produce available in India is limited to the following:

- Kolmi Shaak/ Kalmi Saag (water spinach)
- Tulsi/Basil
- Carrot tops
- Broccoli leaves
- Lettuce – romaine or dark leaf (not iceberg lettuce)
- Coriander - not too much
- Bell Peppers (green, yellow, red)
- Pumpkin (boiled one inch)

- Lemongrass
- Beet greens
- Cucumber (no skin)
- Cucumber leaves
- Mint
- Cabbage (can sometimes cause digestive upsets & gas)
- Celery & leaves
- Bok choy
- Mustard greens
- Parsley
- Neem leaves
- Apple (NO seeds or core)
- Papaya (NO seeds)
- Guava
- Banana
- Pomegranate (once or twice max in a week little amount)
- Melons (any – can include skin)
- Pear
- Pineapple (remove peel - fresh pineapple juice is good for fur blockage)
- Tomatoes (red fruit only - NOT the leaves)
- Orange (NO skin- segments only)
- Watermelon (NO seeds)
- Rose (all parts of the bush including thorns)

- Sunflower (NO seeds)

For foods SAFE for rabbits see:

https://www.facebook.com/pg/ilikebigbunsandicannotlie/photos/?tab=album&album_id=935661249943501

http://www.medirabbit.com/EN/GI_diseases/Food/Herbs/herbs_en.htm;

http://www.medirabbit.com/EN/GI_diseases/Food/Veg/Veg_en.htm;

http://www.medirabbit.com/EN/GI_diseases/Food/Hay/Hay_en.htm;

http://www.medirabbit.com/EN/GI_diseases/Food/Fruit/fruit_en.htm;

http://www.medirabbit.com/EN/GI_diseases/Food/Flow/flower_en.htm;

http://www.medirabbit.com/EN/GI_diseases/Food/Branch/Branch_en.htm

http://www.medirabbit.com/EN/GI_diseases/Food/Pel/Pellets_en.htm

NEVER FEED RABBITS:

- Rice
- Corn
- Puffed rice (*muri*)
- Chickpeas (*chhola*)
- Bread
- Dairy products
- Avocado
- Iceberg lettuce
- Whole carrots

- Or any type of human food - raw or cooked!

Rabbits are vegetarians ONLY !

But the list is longer than that!

For foods NOT safe for rabbits see:

https://www.facebook.com/pg/ilikebigbunsandicannotlie/photos/?tab=album&album_id=935805383262421

http://www.medirabbit.com/EN/GI_diseases/Food/Toxic_plants_en.pdf;

http://www.medirabbit.com/EN/GI_diseases/Food/yogurt.htm:

http://www.medirabbit.com/EN/GI_diseases/Food/onion.htm;

<http://rabbitadvocates.org/careinfo/misc/toxic.html>

HOW TO CORRECTLY FEED A RABBIT

Opinions vary about what to feed them and how much but, essentially, fresh fragrant herbs, safe weeds, safe twigs, safe leaves, safe grasses, fresh hay, good quality pellets with nothing else in them, and limited amounts of fruit as treats are the way to go.

Foods that cause gas - like cabbage, cucumber, broccoli & spinach - are NOT recommended.

Rabbits should have the following every day:~

Pellets: With NO coloured 'biscuits', grains, oats, corn, maize & nuts in them (this is called *rabbit muesli* & it is NOT good for them). Give a small scoop of plain pellets once a day.

Hay: They should have 24/7 access to it. It should be **80%** of their diet & keeps their teeth worn down/bowels moving. If no hay, use fresh grass.

Fresh water: Rabbits won't drink stagnant or old water - it **MUST** be fresh every day.

An assortment of leafy greens (at least 3 different kinds) at breakfast and dinner, comprised of combinations of the following:

- Kolmi Shaak/ Kalmi Saag (water spinach)
- Tulsi/Basil
- Carrot tops
- Broccoli leaves
- Lettuce – romaine or dark leaf (NOT iceberg lettuce)
- Coriander - not too much
- Lemongrass
- Cucumber leaves
- Mint
- Cabbage (can sometimes cause digestive upsets & gas)
- Celery
- Bok choy
- Mustard greens
- Parsley
- Kale (if you can get it)
- Lemon balm (if you can get it)*

**Lemon balm is really good for their tummies!*

Treats only - one inch size, no more than 2 or 3 times a week:

- Apple (NO seeds or core)
- Papaya (NO seeds)
- Guava

- Banana
- Melon (any – can include skin)
- Pear
- Pineapple (remove peel - fresh pineapple juice is good for fur blockage)
- Watermelon (NO seeds)
- Roses (all parts of the bush including thorns)
- Sunflowers (NO seeds)

For an example of a correct diet see:

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/buns-inc/my-bunnies-diet/945226495653643/>

A RABBIT LIVING AREA SHOULD LOOK LIKE THIS:



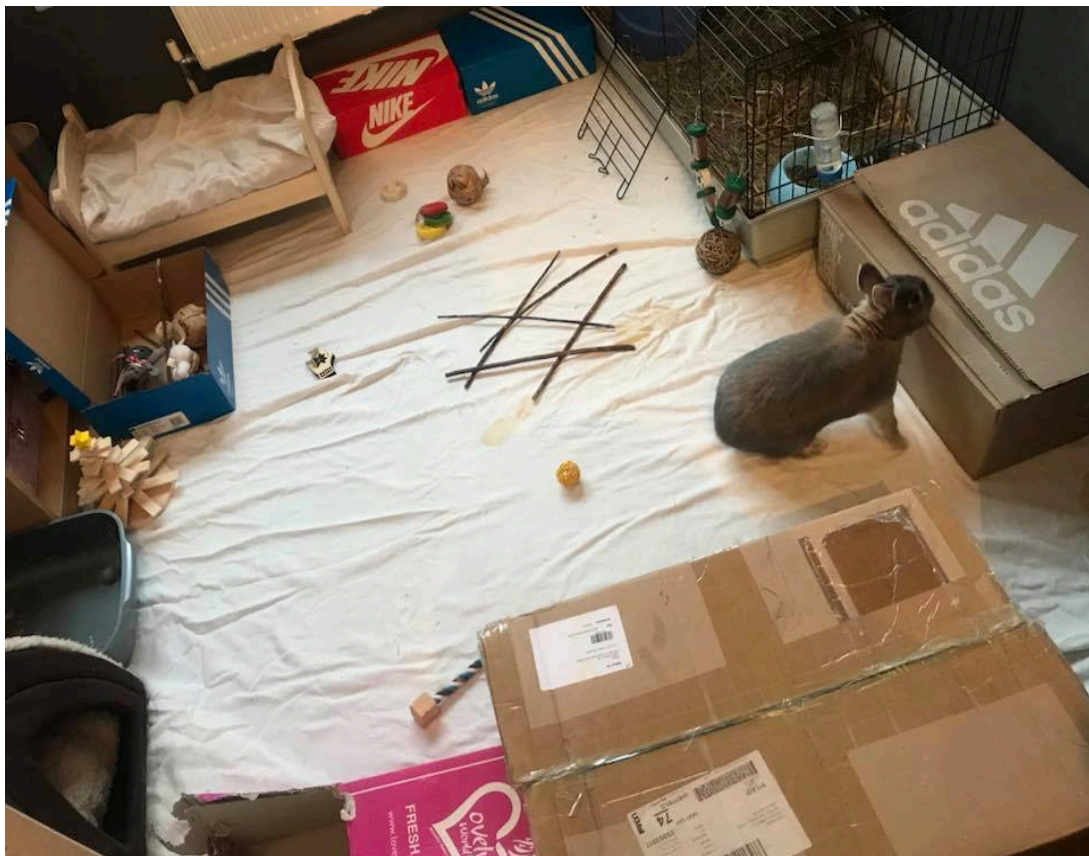
This is ok

OR THIS:



But this one is better

OR THIS:



This is a good example of home made and use of products for cats & dogs

Rabbits need stimulation and room to sit up and stretch out - if they stop moving they can get *bloat or *GI Stasis* due to an inactive bowel.

*****[Please refer to the section below about BLOAT and GI STASIS]*****

Their space should be enclosed by a pen to define it as their area. *Indiamart* has them:

<https://www.indiamart.com/proddetail/dogs-cage-12899774048.html>

They should have soft flooring and bedding.

They should have things they can hide in - like cat beds.

There should always be hay & water in the enclosure.

They should have a litter tray with some sort of absorbent material in it (eg: Neem tree sawdust)

Rabbits need chew toys for their teeth and other toys to keep them entertained. You can make many yourself out of things at home (cardboard, wood, organic string):



Food hanging from pegs



Maze made out of cardboard boxes



Shredded paper



Cat tunnels - you can also make your own out of cardboard

LITTER FOR TOILET TRAINING

Breeder Select Litter is available but sawdust or newspaper are good alternatives:



This is made out of recycled paper and is in pellet form

HOW TO CORRECTLY TOILET TRAIN A RABBIT

FIRSTLY, you need to temporarily confine them to smaller area, provide trays with absorbent material in them, have food above the trays as rabbits like to eat while toileting), and provide something else away from the tray for bedding. If you do these things, it will take no more than 2 to 5 days. If you don't, it can take months or never happen.



YES



YES



YES



YES



NO

It makes a huge difference if they are fixed, as this curbs the desire to mark territory however, it can be done successfully regardless.

The first thing you need to do is work out where THEY favour toileting. They will have certain preferred spots and it's not likely they will initially go where you want them to. Put litter trays in all those spots - use recycled paper pellet litter like **Breeder Select** (or wood shavings or shredded paper) as they can safely nibble on it.



Breeder Select Recycled Paper Pellet Litter

As the rabbits increase in size, the trays should too, so they are always 2-3 times the size of the bunny. Work according to the theory that rabbits like to eat while toileting. They will always have hits & misses around the trays, but the ultimate goal is to have them peeing in the trays every time. When they do miss the trays, soak the pee stain with a solution of white vinegar and water to neutralise the odour, and keep picking up the poop and putting it in the tray - especially while they are watching so they will get the message. While rabbit waste doesn't smell terribly bad, your home can take on a sweaty-like smell if you do nothing about it.



Pee comes in all colours - but normal is the colour in the first vile



The yellow colour on the paws is urine stain - it can be washed off with a damp cloth using water only

Pooping is obviously a lot easier to clean up, and they will always still poop elsewhere. It would take an exceptional rabbit not to.



Rabbits do normal poops (left) & night poops (right called cecotropes - they are meant to eat them - they are not diarrhea (that looks like sludge))



If poop looks like a necklace it means there is too much fur - give the rabbit some fresh pineapple juice to break it down (this poop also shows a pinworm parasite)

It helps to have a favourite food (but particularly hay) suspended over or near/in the trays to lure them in. You may have to cover or cordon off certain areas you don't want them toileting in. If you do this, they will realise that it's not their turf. Use the same principle as crate training a puppy (though a rabbit needs more space). Best

practice is to initially confine them in a smaller enclosure (allow for up to 5 days), and place several litter trays in that space with food in, near or above them.



Do something like this! This is also how an enclosure should be - litter trays, hay, water, chew toys, mats, soft linen bedding, and an enclosed pen you can open

They will get used to sitting in the trays to eat it. Eventually, you won't need to put food as a lure, and you can even reduce the number of trays. If they have hay to sleep in, poop in, and eat it could be confusing for them as to where they are meant to toilet. Just having a tray with nothing in it or a piece of pee-soaked paper **WILL NOT WORK!**

Toilet trays must be regularly cleaned out to prevent flies - flies can make bunnies ill with *Flystrike* on their bottoms. Refer to the other NOTE on this page about it.

DRUGS SAFE FOR RABBITS AVAILABLE IN INDIA

Due to the absence of small animal veterinary care, the following medications can be obtained:

- SIMETHICONE for gas
- RANITIDINE *or* RANTAC *for gas and GI Stasis*
- METACAM *for pain relief (especially for stomach problems and GI Stasis, which is extremely painful)*
- ALBENDAZOLE *for de-worming (careful dosage)*
- ENROFLOXACIN *which is a safe antibiotic for infections*
- SEPTRAN *for killing the coccidia (worm parasite) and bad bacteria*

In critical situations take your rabbit to a vet and ask for LACTATED RINGER'S SOLUTION as it will help the body to function properly.

See this India specific link for what they look like:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1620895971307007&set=pcb.2276144315945806&type=3&theater>

QUICK GUIDE FOR WHAT TO DO FOR BLOAT & GI STASIS:

You should have an emergency bunny repair kit at the ready. It needs to consist of:

- Syringes
- Cotton buds & pads
- Saline solution
- Styptic matches
- Baby apple puree
- Oxbow Critical Care
- Infacol (infant wind solution)
- Vitamin E supplement
- Metacam

[Please refer to NOTE ~ “ESSENTIAL BUNNY EMERGENCY REPAIR KIT”]

To diagnose, place your rabbit on your lap with their head facing away from you and gently massage the tummy - if it feels large & hard it is more likely bloat. This requires IMMEDIATE vet assessment.



Correct way to assess

If the tummy feels soft it is GI Stasis. You can manage this until you can get to a vet by doing the following:

1. Slowly syringe feed **1ml** of *Infacol* (infant gas drops) - you can add some warm water and a little bit of honey to make it taste better. Do this hourly for **2-3** hours, then once every **8** hours until your bunny is eating. Syringe in fluids as well.



Syringe feeding

2. Syringe feed **5-10ml** of **baby apple puree** (or **crushed pellets**) every **half an hour** for **1-2** hours - dilute in warm water to help re-hydrate.
3. Keep your rabbit warm if shivering - use a wheat pillow or hot water bottle wrapped in a towel, or a blanket.



This wrap is called a bunny burrito

4. Add **1 tablespoon** of ***Oxbow Critical Care*** to some apple puree & warm water after **2** hours & continue to syringe feed every **30-60** minutes.
5. Encourage movement to stimulate the gut.
6. If your rabbit has not returned to eating independently and is not mobile go to a vet **IMMEDIATELY**, as a shot of gut stimulant is needed (***Metachlopramide***). It may also be necessary to intravenously apply fluids and administer pain relief such as ***Metacam***.
7. When home again, continue the syringe feeding, administer pain relief at the prescribed intervals, and tempt your rabbit with their favourite food/treats until your rabbit is eating & toileting normally. Lemon balm, sow thistle, plantain, dandelion & celery leaves are recommended to encourage eating. Keep your bunny warm as medication impacts their ability to control their temperature.

OTHER HEALTH MATTERS:

WOUND CARE - use saline solution only & do not cover with bandages - see a vet.

BLEEDING CLAWS DURING TRIMMING - use styptic matches - dip the match head in water and press onto the bleeding claw (black soap also works).

FLOPPY BUNNY SYNDROME - when they lay flat on their tummies, can't lift their head & are paralysed, but they will still eat unassisted; this is life threatening but a first responder treatment is to syringe feed **vitamin E** with some warm water & apple puree. **Then see a vet.**



Weakness

FLYSTRIKE - when flies have laid maggots on the area around the bum and there is infection - it needs special cleaning and antibiotics.



EARS:

Check for parasites! Apply relevant treatment.

EYES:

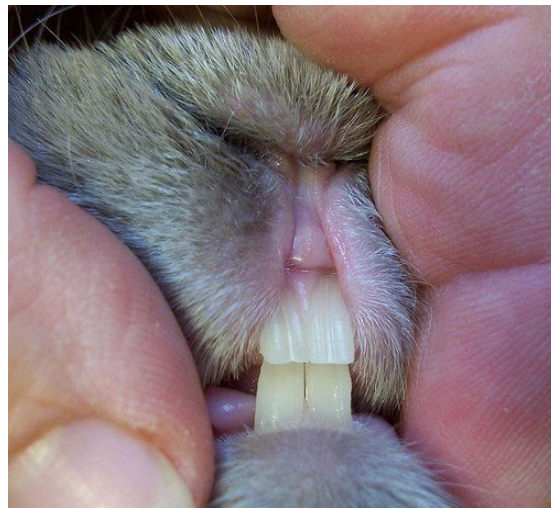
If they are weepy or encrusted (*conjunctivitis*), carefully and gently **WIPE** them with a damp cloth (water only) - use a different cloth for each eye to prevent spreading bacteria.



DO NOT LEAVE THIS UNATTENDED!

TEETH:

Need to be kept worn down with hay and chew toys. Healthy teeth should look like this:



Perfect!



OVERGROWN - BAD !

CLAWS:

Need to be trimmed if there is no access for them to dig anywhere. But it is helpful to provide them with a digging box. If one bleeds when trimming, dab with **soap** (block of soap) or a **styptic match** run under some water).



PERFECT !



OVERGROWN - BAD !

Item	Purpose	How to Use	Where to Buy
Oxbow Critical Care	Concentrated fiber which can be fed to a rabbit that is not eating his normal diet.	Mix with water, 10-15ml every 4-6 hours depending on severity. Only feed if rabbit is not bloated, otherwise it can induce pain.	Rabbit-Sawy Vet clinics and Small Animal Supply Stores such as Beary Pet Suppliers, Alien Pets and Ecottage.
Fiberplex	Probiotic as well as prebiotic concentrate to restore the balance of the digestive tract.	1 notch 1-2 times a day depending on severity. OK to give to rabbit daily through shedding period to prevent fur buildup.	
Corn Starch	Stop bleeding of nails and can also be used to dry-clean a messy bottom.	Sufficient to cover the affected area.	
Silvedene Cream	Antibacterial topical cream that can be used to treat wounds and urine burns.	Sufficient to cover the affected area. Do try to let cream absorb for 5-10 minutes before returning rabbit to normal activity.	
Rid Wind	Infant simethicone that is used to relieve minor gas symptoms.	1ml every 2-4 hours depending on severity; follow by 1-directional abdominal massage.	Common pharmacies such as Watson, Guardian or NTUC Unity.
Appelin	Appetite stimulant to encourage an unwell rabbit to eat.	1ml 2-3 times a day depending on severity. OK to mix 1ml in 100ml water as a way to encourage drinking.	
Vaseline	Topical ointment to calm down inflamed or dry skin.	Sufficient to cover the affected area.	
Saline Solution	Sterile cleansing agent to flush out foreign matter from wounds (10ml packaging) or eyes (Tears Naturelle recommended)	Sufficient to cover the affected area.	
Sterile Syringes	Typically 1ml and 5ml will come in handy in administering medication		
Dressing	Sterile cotton wood, gauze and bandage that can be used to dress and protect wounds.		

SOME BASIC TREATMENTS

BASIC RABBIT CARE TUTORIALS (YOUTUBE): *Please also refer to the other NOTES and ALBUMS on this Buns Inc page for help!*

Cleaning/Bathing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UcoZHBIQ80>

Grooming

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5w4knbRoD2E>

Scent Glands (rabbits generally do this themselves & is not generally needed)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_x9dbSUdomg

Nail Clipping

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9KemnaTGIs&t=4s>

How to Eliminate Rabbit Odour

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwf7qUEPC5Q>

How to Correctly Handle a Rabbit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tIXdvtNwAPk>

Toilet Training

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gP4IaOQsKI4>

Bonding

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7RNxF0x2k0&t=68s>

Signs of Sickness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDwoFd376-c>

Treating Gas

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbyC6CWbm5M>

How to tell a rabbit's sex

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gieHwY0J2A0>

EVERYTHING !!! https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=howcast+rabbits

